

MOORE (Surv.)

A MEMORIAL
OF
GEORGE EDRYCH
AND
HIS FRIENDS IN OUR COLLEGE
1518—1588

APRIL 10, 1911

— ita res accendent lumina rebus.

The splendour of the robe with which our newly elected President is vested on this day, the glitter of the caduceus placed in his hand, the magnificence of the mace carried before him; these shining symbols of his office may fitly be imagined to extend their radiance into the obscurity of the past, thus adding to his honour by bringing into our view the illustrious men whose successor he is.

In our library there is a small book by George Edrych, physician, entitled, 'In libros aliquot pauli Æginetæ hypomnemata quædam, seu observationes medicamentorum.' It was published in London in 1588, by Thomas East.

Paulus of Ægina was a late Greek writer, and Dr. Freind, in his 'History of Physick,' fixes his date at about A.D. 640, and praises parts of his writings, particularly those treating of operations. The seven books of Paulus on medicine were published with notes by Janus Cornarius at Lyons in 1551 and 1567, and Edrych had read these commentaries with delight.

The book of Edrych consists of short comments on various passages of Paulus. He gives his own experience of various drugs and methods of treatment, and incidentally tells a little about himself and his patients. He was born in the year of the foundation of our college. When aged seventy he rose at 5 or 6 o'clock and had a good breakfast of bread and honey, or bread and fresh butter, with beer containing mace and cloves or the yolk of an egg, sometimes adding grapes or figs. He took a good meal at mid-day and a very light supper of chicken broth or other fluid. Nicholas Heath, Archbishop of York (1555–1560), was his patient for many years, and by his advice followed this regimen and lived to the age of seventy-eight. Edrych knew four other famous men who lived in the same way with advantage to their health, and one of these was Dr. Chambre, our first Fellow. Another was Cuthbert Tunstall, Bishop of Durham, who died in 1559, aged eighty-four. He treated many cases of the sweating sickness at Oxford in 1556 and saw there what seems to have been a case of hydatid of the lung—the earliest instance to be found in any English book.

He wrote this book in his old age, having pondered over Paulus Ægineta for very many years. After a dedication in Latin to Sir Walter Mildmay there is a preface in Greek, which gives so pleasant an idea of this old Elizabethan physician and Grecian that a scholar who was my guest soon after I had first read the book, and to whom I showed it, took the trouble to make the following admirable translation:

To
The President of the College of Physicians
and
All the Learned and Famous Physicians
of London
Georgius Edricus
Greeting.

Most Honourable Physician,—Three and thirty years ago and more, when I was a young man, just entering this noble Calling, and having taken my place among the physicians of Oxford, it fell to me to spend some little time in that City, and to lay what might be called the Foundations of the Practical Art. In those years I enjoyed the company of men whose Reputation for Learning was of the highest; and chief among them, the great Physicians, Master Owen, Master Clement, and Master Fryer, whom I hold in the utmost honour. They were renowned for their consummate Knowledge of Greek, they were Men of Repute in every sense, and they showed me much Kindness when I was teaching Greek in the University at that time. And now that I am really an old man, and can look back on the same Good-Fortune, I give thanks to Almighty God that He has permitted me to live with men of your high Renown. And I am full of hope that I may share your Favour (and truly I earnestly desire to win it). For, as the saying goes, the Gates of the Muses stand ever open, and, as it seems to me, Courtesy dwells in the hearts of those who have reached the Heights of Learning. And now that I am far on in years, indeed but a useless old man, constrained to think upon my latter end, and knowing that I must soon render account of the one small Talent I possess, a Talent of which perhaps I have made but little use through all these years, labouring all my life to no effect,—knowing this, I have resolved to print these Studies, or, as I might call them, *Prescriptions and Notes*, on Paulus of Ægina, and give them to the public, so that I might complete something that would be useful, and even pleasing, to those young men who have devoted themselves to the Science of Medicine. Therefore, I beseech you, my Courteous Friends, help me in this Work, to wit, set Right whatsoever is Wrong, and point out my Errors with all Freedom of utterance. For I am fully persuaded that it is better to receive the Rebuke of the Wise whom we love, than to listen to the Praises of those who speak to Flatter. For this is the surest Sign of a true Lover. Therefore I intreat you, and with you all who love Medicine, to join me in giving hearty thanks to my noble friend and Mæcenas, Master Walter Mildmay, the Lover of all who love the Muses, the Patron of all in Cambridge who follow Learning, the Foster-Father of a great company of worthy Scholars, both in these days and in the days to come. And to conclude, I know right well that what I have added to the Works of Paulus is not the thousandth part of what it might have been well to write. But I did not think it becoming to be overlong, where no need was, when he himself had been at pains to use few words and fit.

Farewell.

In this preface Edrych mentions three of our presidents with whom he had been acquainted.

Dr. John Clement, of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, was President in 1544. It is enough to say of him that his virtues and his learning endeared him to Sir Thomas More.

Dr. John Fryer was President 1549-50, and died of the plague October 21st, 1563. He was educated at Eton and at King's College, Cambridge.

Dr. George Owen was President in 1553 and 1554. He was a Fellow of Merton College, Oxford.

In Edrych's dedication he speaks as if he had also known Dr. Edward Wotton, our President 1541-43, and Dr. Wendy, of Gonville Hall, who was elected a Fellow in 1551.

Thus through Edrych we get a glimpse of four of our former presidents. It is especially appropriate to mention him this evening, as we have just received a manuscript copy of his book, by the bequest of our late learned librarian.

This manuscript is bound in vellum, and has on each side a shield with the arms of Queen Elizabeth. Its history may be learnt from its own pages. It begins with a dedication to Sir Walter Mildmay, the well-known founder of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and Chancellor of the Exchequer to Queen Elizabeth from 1566 till his death in 1589. On the first blank leaf is pasted a small piece of paper on which is written, "The Earl of Westmoreland, 1856."

I happen to have seen other books of this Lord Westmoreland with the same simple book-plate. He began life as a soldier under Wellington in the Peninsula, and fought at Rolicca and Vimiero and Talavera. Later in life he held several diplomatic posts. His country seat was Apethorpe, which he inherited from Francis Fane, who married the daughter and heiress of Sir Anthony Mildmay, eldest son of Sir Walter Mildmay. Thus the manuscript which Edrych sent to Mildmay came to belong to the Lord Westmoreland, who died in 1859.

When his books were sold it left the shelf at Apethorpe, on which, as its condition shows, it had probably rested since its author presented it in 1588 to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The manuscript begins with six lines of Latin verse followed by a Greek version, also in six lines. On the next page is the Latin dedication to Mildmay. The Greek preface does not appear in the manuscript, nor do three paragraphs which follow the formal conclusion of the treatise at the end of a note on the treatment of a woman with gout.

Both the English and the Greek writing of the manuscript are clear and beautiful, and Dr. Payne thought that the whole was in the author's hand. It seems right to preserve the memory of this George Edrych, a friend of our College who knew its first fellow and four of its presidents.

NORMAN MOORE.